

Filipino and English proficiency and comprehension of Grade 3 learners

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the level of proficiency and comprehension in Filipino and English of Grade 3 learners in Mambusao East District during the School Year 2024–2025. It also aimed to identify whether there is a significant relationship between proficiency and comprehension in Filipino and English among Grade 3 learners. The study employed complete enumeration, with a total of seventy-one (71) Grade 3 learners as participants. To measure Filipino proficiency, the researcher developed a 16-item test, while an 18-item test was constructed to assess English proficiency. To measure comprehension in Filipino, a 19-item test was developed, and a 20-item test was used to assess English comprehension. Statistical tools were employed in analyzing the descriptive data, such as frequency count, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's r , with the level of significance set at 0.05. Findings revealed that Grade 3 learners had a moderate level of proficiency in Filipino and English. In terms of comprehension, learners demonstrated a high level in Filipino but only a moderate level in English. Furthermore, results showed that there is a significant relationship between Filipino proficiency and English proficiency; Filipino proficiency and Filipino comprehension; Filipino proficiency and English comprehension; English proficiency and Filipino comprehension; English proficiency and English comprehension; and Filipino comprehension and English comprehension.

Keywords: language proficiency, reading comprehension, bilingual learners

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INTRODUCTION

At birth, human beings may be likened to a blank sheet of paper—devoid of knowledge or experience. As individuals grow, they gradually acquire learning through education, with capabilities continuously developing alongside age and social interactions. Formal schooling

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further enriches this process, and the lessons imparted by teachers play a critical role in shaping the future of learners. Focused attention to learning fosters brighter opportunities, while knowledge acquired from various aspects of life contributes to holistic self-development.

In this regard, proficiency and comprehension in Filipino and English are crucial for Grade 3 learners as these skills serve as the foundation of their academic journey. At an early stage, children acquire basic reading and comprehension abilities that enable them to understand subject matter across disciplines. Since language functions as the key to multiple dimensions of learning, effective instruction and guidance ensure that young learners are prepared to grasp more complex concepts in higher educational levels.

Despite the importance of these skills, observations reveal that many Grade 3 learners struggle with reading and comprehension. Those with weaker reading abilities participate less actively in class and encounter difficulties responding to questions that require higher-order thinking skills. These challenges highlight the need for effective teaching strategies that can strengthen language proficiency and comprehension, thereby equipping learners for academic success in the succeeding stages of education.

Dicang and Molina (2023) observed that one of the major difficulties faced by learners is the lack of confidence in asking questions when lessons are not fully understood. Their capacity to use Filipino in social contexts is often tested amid the influence of English and Ilocano, which can lead to shyness during recitations and classroom interactions. However, their study also noted that students employed their own strategies to improve their Filipino-speaking skills, underscoring the importance of valuing and continuously developing proficiency in Filipino not only in academic contexts but also in daily communication.

Parallel to this, studies on English proficiency reveal growing concerns. Santos, Fernandez, and colleagues (2022) reported a decline in Filipinos' ability to use English, as evidenced by results from global assessments such as the EF English Proficiency Index, TOEIC, and IELTS. Similarly, Adigue and Valentino (2022) found that age and educational attainment significantly influenced respondents' comprehension of technical English terminologies. Media exposure, including television, radio, and infographics on social media, contributed positively to comprehension; however, the use of unfamiliar technical vocabulary posed challenges, prompting the recommendation to explain such terms in Filipino for greater clarity.

In an international context, Kiew and Shah (2020) investigated the reading abilities of Level 2 primary school students in Malaysia studying English as a Second Language (ESL). Their findings emphasized that prior knowledge, motivation, interest, and vocabulary are vital components in learners' reading comprehension. These results resonate with the present study, as Grade 3 learners in the Philippines also encounter challenges in interpreting and analyzing texts in both Filipino and English.

Given these circumstances, this study underscores the importance of developing effective instructional strategies that can enhance language proficiency and comprehension. Addressing such difficulties early on is critical, as unresolved learning gaps may widen in higher grade levels, leading to more significant setbacks in academic performance. Thus, strengthening language skills through innovative and targeted teaching approaches remains essential for learners' educational success.

The study is grounded in Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1960), which posits that human behavior is largely influenced by environmental factors. Learning occurs through

observation and interaction with others, which in turn shapes skills, attitudes, and perspectives. This theoretical lens emphasizes the critical role of social engagement in learning, underscoring how education serves not only as a means for individual advancement but also as a tool for building a more progressive and inclusive society.

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to determine the proficiency and comprehension in Filipino and English of Grade 3 learners from Group 3 schools, namely Balit, Baye, Bergante, Bungsi, and Cala-agus, under the Mambusao East District, Mambusao, Capiz, who were officially enrolled during the School Year 2024–2025. The primary objective of this study was to address the following research questions:

1. What is the level of proficiency in Filipino among Grade 3 learners?
2. What is the level of proficiency in English among Grade 3 learners?
3. What is the level of comprehension in Filipino among Grade 3 learners?
4. What is the level of comprehension in English among Grade 3 learners?
5. Is there a significant relationship between proficiency and comprehension in Filipino and English among Grade 3 learners?

METHODOLOGY

The present study sought to determine the proficiency and comprehension in Filipino and English of Grade 3 learners from Group 3 schools in the Mambusao East District, Mambusao, Capiz, during the School Year 2024–2025. To achieve this purpose, a survey-correlational research design was employed. This design was considered appropriate because it describes and interprets conditions as they exist and identifies the direction and strength of the relationships between variables. As Creswell (2014) noted, survey-correlational research provides valuable insights into patterns and trends by examining associations among variables. In this study, proficiency and comprehension in Filipino and English were measured through researcher-made tests. The quantitative approach allowed for the identification of relationships and the assessment of how comprehension in both languages was influenced by proficiency. The independent variables were proficiency in Filipino and English, while the dependent variables were comprehension in Filipino and English. To interpret the results, descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used, while Pearson's r was employed for inferential analysis at a 0.05 level of significance.

The respondents of the study were seventy-one (71) Grade 3 learners officially enrolled in School Year 2024–2025 from Group 3 schools, which included Balit, Baye, Bergante, Bungsi, and Cala-agus. A complete enumeration method was utilized since the total population was relatively small, ensuring that all eligible learners were included in the study. Of the respondents, 40 learners or 56.33% were eight years old, 29 or 40.85% were nine years old, and 2 or 2.82% were ten years old. In terms of sex, 45 respondents or 63.38% were male, while 26 or 36.62% were female. With regard to the educational attainment of the fathers, 4 or 5.63% reached the elementary level, 6 or 8.45% graduated from elementary school, 41 or 57.75% attained secondary education, and 20 or

28.17% completed college. For the mothers, 2 or 2.82% reached the elementary level, 4 or 5.63% graduated from elementary school, 37 or 52.11% attained secondary education, and 28 or 39.44% completed college. In terms of occupation, 15 fathers or 21.13% held permanent jobs, 55 or 77.46% were in non-permanent employment, and 1 or 1.41% was unemployed. For mothers, 10 or 14.08% were permanently employed, 47 or 66.20% were non-permanently employed, and 14 or 19.72% were unemployed.

To gather the necessary data, a researcher-made instrument was constructed consisting of five parts: profile of respondents, proficiency in Filipino, proficiency in English, comprehension in Filipino, and comprehension in English. The Filipino Proficiency Test was composed of 16 items, interpreted using the following scale: 12.81–16.00 (Excellent), 9.61–12.80 (Very Good), 6.41–9.60 (Moderate), 3.21–6.40 (Fair), and 0.00–3.20 (Needs Improvement). The English Proficiency Test was composed of 18 items, with the scoring scale set at 14.41–18.00 (Excellent), 10.81–14.40 (Very Good), 7.21–10.80 (Moderate), 3.61–7.20 (Fair), and 0.00–3.60 (Needs Improvement). The Filipino Comprehension Test consisted of 19 items, interpreted using the scale: 15.21–19.00 (Excellent), 11.41–15.20 (Very Good), 7.61–11.40 (Moderate), 3.81–7.60 (Fair), and 0.00–3.80 (Needs Improvement). Finally, the English Comprehension Test consisted of 20 items, with the following scale: 16.01–20.00 (Excellent), 12.01–16.00 (Very Good), 8.01–12.00 (Moderate), 4.01–8.00 (Fair), and 0.00–4.00 (Needs Improvement).

All tests were subjected to content validation and pilot testing to ensure reliability. The pilot testing was conducted with thirty (30) Grade 3 learners who were not part of the study. Item analysis was then performed to determine the index of difficulty and index of discrimination of each test item. Items with indices ranging from 0.20 to 0.80 were retained, while those with values lower than 0.20 or higher than 0.80 were discarded. This process ensured that the tests were valid and appropriate for use in the actual study.

In the data collection process, the researcher first secured permission from the school principals and the advisers of the respondents through formal communication. Parental consent was also obtained by sending letters informing them that their children would participate in the study, with assurance that the data gathered would be used solely for research purposes and treated with strict confidentiality. Ethical considerations were observed at all stages, including compliance with safety protocols in the administration of the tests. The researcher personally administered the instruments and was assisted by co-teachers to ensure accuracy and consistency in the implementation.

The completed test papers were retrieved, encoded, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Several statistical tools were employed in the analysis: frequency count was used to determine the distribution of responses across intervals; percentage was applied to present the proportion of responses in percentage form; the mean was used to describe the overall level of proficiency and comprehension in Filipino and English; and the standard deviation was employed to determine the consistency and variability of responses. Finally, Pearson's r was used as the inferential statistical tool to test the significance of the relationship between proficiency and comprehension in Filipino and English, with the significance level set at 0.05.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study examined the proficiency and comprehension in Filipino and English among Grade 3 learners in the Mambusao East District, and the results are presented in both descriptive and inferential terms. The data were processed using statistical tools such as frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's r , with an alpha level of 0.05 set as the criterion for the acceptance or rejection of hypotheses.

Learners' proficiency in Filipino

The overall proficiency in Filipino among the learners was described as moderate, with a mean score of 9.06 and a standard deviation of 2.90. This indicates that the learners may have had difficulty with spelling words correctly, identifying the proper prepositions, pronouns, or adjectives to use in sentences, and determining the correct parts of speech. However, they obtained higher scores on items related to vocabulary and determining word meanings. This suggests that more instructional time may have been devoted to reading and vocabulary development rather than on technical aspects of the language such as grammar and spelling. It is also possible that Filipino was not the primary language used at home, thereby limiting exposure to correct usage in daily life. In addition, the limited time allocated to Filipino in the curriculum compared to other subjects may have contributed to these results. Some learners may have struggled to identify appropriate words because of confusion in understanding their proper usage in sentences, while others may not yet have fully developed their spelling skills, leading to mistakes in their answers. External factors such as the length of practice time, the coverage of the test, and environmental conditions may also have influenced their performance. These findings differ from those of De Los Reyes (2021), who reported that the level of linguistic knowledge demonstrated by learners in word structure, sentence construction, and vocabulary yielded a satisfactory overall interpretation. The findings highlight the relationship between the factors affecting learners' writing performance and the level of their linguistic competence, suggesting that while there are challenges in technical aspects of language, there remains a positive link between learning factors and skill development.

Learner's proficiency in English

The results further showed that the overall proficiency in English was also moderate, with a mean score of 9.24 and a standard deviation of 3.57. Learners showed difficulty in choosing the correct words to complete sentences and in constructing sentences properly, particularly in identifying appropriate verbs. The presence of unfamiliar words may have also caused confusion in understanding meaning and usage. However, they performed better on spelling-related items, indicating greater emphasis on this skill compared to other technical aspects of the language. The learners' home language was likely not English, limiting their exposure to proper English usage in daily life. Furthermore, insufficient reading practice and limited access to English books or materials may have restricted their vocabulary development. Competing subject demands may also have reduced instructional time for English. Environmental and situational factors, such as the time allotted for practice, the length of the test, and classroom conditions, may have also affected their performance. These findings are consistent with Fernandez (2020), who found that learners'

basic English language skills were approaching proficiency in some areas but still required improvement in others.

Learners' comprehension in Filipino

The comprehension results indicated that the learners performed at a high level in Filipino, with a mean score of 11.73 and a standard deviation of 5.62. This suggests that they were able to identify main ideas, understand key details, recognize contextual clues, interpret meaning, and draw implications from texts. Their strong foundation in vocabulary and continuous use of Filipino in everyday conversation likely contributed to their ability to comprehend texts effectively. The use of teaching strategies such as storytelling, graded reading books, and interactive classroom discussions may also have enhanced their skills. These findings are consistent with the study of Sanggawa, Santiago, Santos, Sapdoy, and Eguia (2024), which revealed that most learners demonstrated a high level of comprehension, as shown by their ability to respond accurately to text-based questions even without extensive guidance from teachers or parents.

Learners' comprehension in English

In contrast, comprehension in English was found to be moderate, with a mean score of 10.76 and a standard deviation of 5.53. Learners may have struggled with limited vocabulary, difficulties in sentence construction, and challenges in understanding complex grammatical structures, all of which could have reduced their ability to identify main ideas and details in texts. Their limited practice in forming sentences and insufficient exposure to English texts may have also affected their performance. Furthermore, a lack of interest or motivation to read English texts may have contributed to this outcome. These findings contrast with those of Pua (2021), who reported that most learners preferred independent reading, understood the texts provided, and performed at high levels with few experiencing difficulties.

Relationship between proficiency and comprehension in Filipino and English

The inferential analysis using Pearson's r revealed significant correlations among all variables considered in the study. Filipino proficiency was significantly correlated with English proficiency ($r = 0.551$, $p = 0.000$), Filipino comprehension ($r = 0.488$, $p = 0.000$), and English comprehension ($r = 0.614$, $p = 0.000$). English proficiency was significantly correlated with Filipino comprehension ($r = 0.534$, $p = 0.000$) and English comprehension ($r = 0.745$, $p = 0.000$). Filipino comprehension was significantly correlated with English comprehension ($r = 0.565$, $p = 0.000$). These results show that as learners' proficiency in one language improves, their comprehension in the same or another language also improves.

The significant correlation between Filipino and English proficiency suggests that the development of skills in Filipino may provide a foundation for acquiring English proficiency, as similarities in sentence structure, idea organization, and grammar rules support the learning of English. Learners may transfer the skills they acquire in Filipino, such as proper sentence construction and vocabulary use, to English, thereby facilitating second-language learning. Villanueva (2022) supported this finding, noting that familiarity with Filipino had a significant

relationship with reading comprehension performance in the language, and that the use of metacognitive strategies enhanced comprehension. The relationship between Filipino proficiency and English comprehension further supports the role of Filipino as a bridge to learning English, consistent with the argument of Ocampo (2023), who emphasized the importance of vocabulary development for understanding more complex texts.

The correlation between English proficiency and Filipino comprehension suggests that learners' English skills may also enhance their ability to comprehend Filipino texts. This is likely due to similarities in reading processes across the two languages, such as analyzing context clues, identifying main ideas, and interpreting meaning. Gunobgunob-Mirasol (2019) emphasized the role of vocabulary size and reading strategies in reading performance, while also highlighting the value of vocabulary instruction in ESL contexts to strengthen comprehension skills. The significant relationship between English proficiency and English comprehension indicates that as learners become more proficient in English, their comprehension abilities in the language also improve. A larger vocabulary, stronger grammar knowledge, and effective reading strategies, such as inferring meaning from context and analyzing sentence structure, help facilitate comprehension. Ma et al. (2015) reinforced this conclusion, finding that vocabulary size was the strongest predictor of reading comprehension performance among four vocabulary subcomponents.

Finally, the significant correlation between Filipino and English comprehension demonstrates that learners who can comprehend Filipino texts well are also more capable of understanding English texts. This may be due to the transfer of reading strategies across languages, such as identifying key ideas, analyzing details, and making inferences from context. Their strong foundation in Filipino comprehension may have provided a scaffold for understanding English texts, particularly where there are similarities in words and structures across the two languages. Mikulec and Vuić (2019) confirmed this relationship by noting that students with high comprehension in one language often exhibit high comprehension in another.

In conclusion, the findings revealed that Grade 3 learners demonstrated moderate proficiency in both Filipino and English, high comprehension in Filipino, and moderate comprehension in English. Significant relationships were found across all variables, indicating that proficiency and comprehension in one language are strongly associated with proficiency and comprehension in the other. These results provide evidence that language skills in Filipino and English are interdependent, and that strengthening one contributes to the development of the other. Based on these findings, the null hypotheses stating that no significant relationships exist among the variables were rejected.

CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to determine the levels of proficiency and comprehension in Filipino and English among Grade 3 learners enrolled in School Year 2024–2025 in selected Group 3 schools of Mambusao East District, Mambusao, Capiz. Using a survey-correlational design, the research examined both the learners' skills and the relationships between proficiency and comprehension in the two languages. Seventy-one learners participated in the study through complete enumeration, and data were gathered using researcher-made proficiency and comprehension tests in both Filipino and English. These instruments underwent validation, pilot

testing, and item analysis to ensure reliability and appropriateness. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, alongside inferential statistics through Pearson's r , with the level of significance set at 0.05.

Findings revealed that the proficiency of learners in Filipino was moderate, suggesting that while students possess basic knowledge, they face challenges in areas such as spelling, contextual vocabulary, and correct use of prepositions. Similarly, proficiency in English was also moderate, pointing to difficulties in sentence construction, vocabulary development, and spelling accuracy. In contrast, comprehension in Filipino was found to be high, showing that learners could effectively understand texts, although further development in interpretation, inference, and analysis is necessary. Meanwhile, comprehension in English was only moderate, highlighting limitations in vocabulary, grammar, and contextual understanding, which may be attributed to limited exposure to English in everyday use. Statistical analysis further confirmed significant correlations between proficiency and comprehension in both Filipino and English, indicating that stronger skills in one language tend to support better performance in the other.

These results lead to several important conclusions. The learners' moderate proficiency in both Filipino and English demonstrates the need for more engaging and effective instructional strategies that focus on vocabulary expansion, grammar, spelling practice, and contextual use of language. Their high comprehension in Filipino indicates readiness for more advanced tasks in interpretation and analysis, while their moderate comprehension in English points to the necessity of broader exposure and practice in using the language. The significant correlations among the variables underscore the interdependent nature of bilingual acquisition, showing that improvements in one language positively influence development in the other.

Based on these conclusions, the study recommends targeted interventions for learners, teachers, parents, and policymakers. Learners should be encouraged to engage in activities such as journaling, spelling practice, interactive reading, and word games to reinforce their skills. Teachers should adopt innovative, interactive, and contextualized teaching strategies—including storytelling, role-playing, spelling bees, and integrative grammar instruction—that strengthen both proficiency and comprehension. Parents should provide a language-rich home environment by supporting activities such as reading, storytelling, and educational play. At the policy level, the Department of Education should consider expanding support programs, including the provision of additional reading materials in both languages, professional development opportunities for teachers, and competitions in writing, spelling, and storytelling to motivate and engage learners.

Finally, the study highlights the value of integrating Filipino and English instruction in ways that reinforce each other, enabling learners to transfer skills across languages more effectively. Future researchers may build on this study by exploring additional factors that affect bilingual proficiency and comprehension, as well as by developing and testing interventions designed to strengthen learners' overall language and literacy performance. This research thus provides not only an assessment of current competencies but also insights into how bilingual education can be advanced to better prepare learners for academic success.

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